

# NEWS RELEASE COMMUNIQUE

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## HEALTH COUNCIL TO DEAL WITH ENVIRONMENTAL HYPERSENSITIVITY

The Ottawa-Carleton Regional District Health Council has recognized environmental hypersensitivity as a disabling physical condition, and will take positive steps to deal with the problem.

Environmental hypersensitivity is the subject of a complaint received by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which has been settled recently.

The complainant, Chris Brown, defined environmental hypersensitivity as "an umbrella term referring to a group of sometimes disabling disorders caused by sensitivity to both natural and synthetic chemicals."

He claimed he had asked the Ottawa-Carleton Regional District Health Council to include the condition in the health planning process, but his request was ignored.

Mr. Brown, who has environmental hypersensitivity, then filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, alleging discrimination with respect to services, goods and facilities on the basis of handicap.

After a series of negotiations, a settlement has been achieved and approved by the Commission.

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Ontario  
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According to Chief Commissioner Catherine Frazee, this is the first time a settlement of this nature has been reached.

"I am pleased to see that this issue can be resolved by using the **Human Rights Code**," she said, noting that the case is particularly important because the District Health Council agreed, as part of the settlement, to recognize environmental hypersensitivity as a disabling physical condition, and undertakes to deal with the issue constructively.

"Another positive aspect is that the settlement has been achieved through the joint effort and goodwill of the complainant and the respondent," she added, commending the contribution of Commission staff in facilitating this resolution.

The District Health Council will organize an educational workshop to discuss the nature and extent of environmental hypersensitivity, possible prevention and remedial measures, including treatment and accommodation issues, and the promotion of a wider understanding of the problem.

Various organizations in related fields, including the Academy of Medicine, the Human Ecology Foundation of Canada, and the Allergy and Environmental Health Association of Ontario, will be invited to take part in the workshop.

Mr. Brown has agreed to provide advice and comment during the planning of the workshop, to be held on April 6 this year. He will also address the executive members of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional District Health Council on the topic of environmental hypersensitivity.

He thanked the Ontario Human Rights Commission for achieving the settlement, and indicated that "it is a landmark case because it would reduce misconceptions about the issue, and help those with the problem in finding a solution."

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